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Summary of mid-term reviews and major evaluations of country programmes

East Asia and Pacific region

Summary

The present report was prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1995/8 (E/ICEF/1995/9/Rev.1), which requested the secretariat to submit to the Board a summary of the outcome of mid-term reviews (MTRs) and major country programme evaluations, specifying, inter alia, the results achieved, lessons learned and the need for any adjustments in the country programme. The Board is to comment on the reports and provide guidance to the secretariat, if necessary. The MTR and evaluations described in the present report were conducted during 2000.

Introduction

1. The present report covers the mid-term review (MTR) undertaken in Papua New Guinea, the only country in the region to undertake an MTR in 2000. The report also includes broad-based, end-decade evaluations and several sectoral project evaluations carried out during 2000.

2. Almost all of the countries completed an end-decade assessment exercise in 2000, and eight conducted multiple indicator cluster surveys (MICS) or other special surveys to complement information obtained from routine sources. Various other national surveys provided additional information to strengthen the end-decade assessments. Notable lessons learned included the need for reliable indicators and

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clear baseline data if measurable targets are to be set, particularly those that aim for universal coverage or percentage reductions. Ten years after the World Summit for Children, there are still no standard indicators for most issues related to child protection. Analysis of the end-decade reviews revealed considerable "unfinished business" for the next decade, including unacceptably high levels of maternal mortality, persistent malnutrition, poor sanitation and major concerns related to child protection. The latter area covers many issues, including child labour, children in conflict with the law, those affected by HIV/AIDS, children with disabilities and those born into ethnic minorities. HIV/AIDS is a massive threat to the region, the true manifestations of which will only be realized after several years. Ensuring that appropriate programme indicators are in place, increasing resource mobilization, creating stronger and broader alliances for children, and maintaining a focus on priority issues will be required to overcome these persistent and pervasive threats to children's and women's lives.

Mid-term review of the Papua New Guinea country programme

3. The Papua New Guinea country programme for 1998-2002 was the first to be managed by the full-fledged country office in Port Moresby. The MTR meeting was the culmination of an extensive review process which began in mid-1999 with a series of sectoral consultations with government counterparts. The outcome indicated a need for some changes in programme direction consistent with the Government's "Initial Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child", which went beyond survival and development rights and emphasized the need for better protection of children and women from abuse, exploitation and harmful working conditions. A second round of sectoral consultations reached agreement in principle on areas for UNICEF cooperation in the remaining years of the country programme.

4. The situation of children and women. At the start of the country programme in 1998, Papua New Guinea was in a period of acute crisis resulting from natural disasters, economic recession and political instability, exacerbated by a deteriorating security situation. In 1999, a new Government came to power and launched a series of economic reforms which are restoring investor and donor confidence that, in turn, are fuelling economic recovery. The changes in the programme environment relevant to UNICEF and the well-being of children and women were substantial. They included a clear identification of national priorities on basic education, primary health care, rural infrastructure and primary production, and the creation of a National Department of Planning and Monitoring to coordinate the Government's responses to children's issues. In addition, the accelerated decentralization to district and local government levels and the end of a long war did much to improve the macro-environment.

5. However, infant, child and maternal mortality rates (IMR, U5MR and MMR) remain very high. In 1999, IMR was 79 per 1,000 live births, U5MR was 112 per 1,000 live births and MMR was 370 per 100,000 live births. Almost one third of children were under weight. Only a small proportion of the population has access to routine health services. The generally poor health situation is exacerbated by the rapid spread of HIV infection. By September 2000, 3,145 cases had been reported, a

25 per cent increase in only one year. Some 90 per cent of infections are acquired heterosexually. The low status of women makes them particularly vulnerable, and cases of mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) are increasing. The MTR concluded that primary school enrolment had increased from 70 per cent in 1991 to 90 per cent in 2000, but other data sources, notably the Education for All exercise in 2000, suggest lower levels. Nevertheless, the trends in enrolment are positive, and an increasing number of children are graduating to grades seven and eight. Retention, however, remains a major problem, with 57 per cent of grade one entrants still failing to complete grade six.

6. Although women are guaranteed equal rights under the Constitution, and Papua New Guinea was the first Pacific island country to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, there are many barriers to women realizing their rights. Traditional attitudes tend to denigrate the value of women, subordinate women to men, and condone violence within and outside of the family. The result is poor health, poor nutrition, high mortality, and low levels of literacy, education and economic empowerment. Although a few women have achieved high social status in modern political, economic or professional life, the situation of the average woman, especially in rural areas, remains dire. Over 30 per cent of women are illiterate, and MMR is among the highest in the region.

7. **Achievements and constraints**. There have been some notable achievements in the social mobilization programme. The process to develop the first report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (submitted in October 2000) drew national attention to children in need of special protection and stimulated action on law reforms. It also created new alliances for child protection, including the Departments of Home Affairs, Labour and the Attorney-General, together with a "Parliamentary Group for Children" and the Child Welfare Council. Based on this enhanced commitment to children, Papua New Guinea will prepare a National Plan of Action for Children for 2001-2010. Legislation for a Human Rights Commission is now before the National Executive. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has been translated into Pidgin, and various other materials have been developed to promote the Convention. Community drama is one innovative approach that has been effective in introducing the Convention. A National Child Rights Monitoring Committee, under the chairmanship of the Attorney-General, has been formed to coordinate monitoring and implementation of the Convention. Although HIV/AIDS received only brief mention in the original country programme, it has become a major part of UNICEF work due to the explosive growth of the epidemic. Through the reallocation of resources and additional regional funding, the UNICEF response incorporates advocacy, social mobilization, capacity-building and policy support for the prevention of MTCT, social marketing of condoms, community-based counselling and rehabilitation, and protection for AIDS orphans. Continued commitment and improved planning, monitoring, evaluation and the application of results to all of the above activities will be required to sustain the good initial progress.

8. Implementation of the capacity-building programme to develop the abilities of communities to meet the needs of women and children has progressed slowly. All of the preparatory activities – community mobilization, training and procurement – are complete. It is now expected that implementation will proceed more rapidly, so that by the end of 2001, the core package of interventions will have gone to scale in two

pilot districts and be ready for replication nationally. Work is currently under way to define a safe motherhood component that will be integrated in the core nutrition/malaria/immunization training package. Water and sanitation facilities have been provided at selected health centres. Innovative approaches are being employed to motivate and mobilize schoolchildren and community drama troupes for health promotion and HIV/AIDS awareness-raising. Some elements of the capacity-building programme, for example, literacy promotion and early childhood development, have not progressed. For others, notably basic education, progress has been slow.

9. Programme implementation was difficult in 1998 due to the multiple crises that engulfed the country politically, economically and socially. A return to stability in 1999 allowed accelerated implementation. UNICEF work, however, continued to be constrained by low funding levels and low levels of in-house technical capacity. The country programme is complex and will require considerable inputs of both financial and professional resources to achieve its goals.

10. **Assessment of programme strategies: lessons learned**. The MTR identified the need to accelerate implementation of many of the projects within the two major programmes if goals are to be met. Both national and UNICEF capacities need to be strengthened in order to respond to emerging children's issues, strengthen partnerships with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the civil society, and include community-based initiatives in support of national policy and programme formulation. Many lessons emerge from the experience of the last 30 months. Among the most important are the need to: (a) strike an appropriate balance between national and subnational interventions and between advocacy and action; (b) draw on global and local "best practices", and mobilize technical expertise in strategically important areas not addressed by Papua New Guinea's other partners (e.g. child rights, child protection, social mobilization and early childhood education); (c) build partnerships and alliances for children with all levels of Government, NGOs, civil society and the private sector; and (d) maintain sufficient UNICEF in-house technical capacity to adequately support counterparts.

11. The MTR indicated the need for a number of adjustments in the following areas that will be carried out in the remaining years of the country programme:

(a) In strategy: increased emphasis will be given to strengthening partnerships and alliances for children; mobilizing resources; formulating child-focused policies; and strengthening capacity for rights-based programming and planning, especially at subnational levels;

(b) In programme structure: UNICEF will work towards a five-programme structure comprised of health and nutrition; HIV/AIDS; child protection; education; and social mobilization. Community-based projects will be refocused as supportive elements of national policy implementation and will not in themselves constitute separate programmes;

(c) In programme activities: there will be increased activities in all programme areas where sound foundations have been already established during the first half of the country programme.

12. **Country programme management plan**. UNICEF in-house technical capacity will be expanded and enhanced to accelerate and strengthen programme implementation. Three new technical staff, one each in education, health and child

protection will join UNICEF in 2001. Additional staffing requirements will be reviewed in 2001 in accordance with the reformulated country programme.

Strengthening evaluation in the region

13. In addition to the regular programme-focused evaluations discussed below, the special exercises undertaken in connection with the end-decade reviews were themselves evaluative in nature, as systematic assessments of progress towards a set of planned objectives. Other related activities, such as data collection and analysis, served an essential supporting function.

14. In most countries, UNICEF was an active participant in the review process, and in one way or another supported this process and the preparation of country reports. The most substantial contribution of UNICEF was through its financial and technical assistance for MICS and other major data-gathering activities. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Indonesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Viet Nam all conducted full-scale MICS or incorporated MICS questionnaire modules into other surveys, especially those modules covering topics such as child registration and AIDS awareness, on which little information was available from alternative sources. Cambodia carried out a comprehensive Demographic and Health Survey that collected basically the same set of data as a full-scale MICS, in addition to detailed information on reproductive health and related topics. In some countries, including the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Indonesia, MICS were carried out in conjunction with other surveys, thereby reducing total costs and providing opportunities for analysis using a broader range of variables than would be possible if each survey had been conducted independently.

15. While these surveys were generally prompted by the need to report on the end-decade status of the World Summit for Children goals, they also served several broader and longer-term objectives. One of these was to strengthen in-country capacity to plan and carry out future national surveys, and make more effective use of their results. This was accomplished in part through three regional MICS workshops carried out in 1999 and 2000 which focused on planning and survey design, data entry, and analysis and reporting, respectively, and were designed to train key UNICEF and counterpart staff from countries planning end-decade surveys. In addition, UNICEF technical and financial support for country-level implementation also helped to enhance knowledge and skills in survey design and implementation.

16. The data generated by the round of surveys in 2000 should also serve a broader purpose than assessing the current status of indicators related to the World Summit goals. They will enrich and expand the stock of child-related data in these countries, provide a reliable point of comparison with earlier data on the same indicators, and establish a baseline for future monitoring and assessment, especially for topics on which little systematically collected data currently exists.

17. End-of-cycle reviews were carried out in China and Myanmar, two of the seven countries that completed programmes of cooperation in 2000. The Myanmar review covered the entire country programme and focused on assessing implementation strategies and measurable results against stated objectives. The review found that the main objectives had been reached despite a very difficult

programme environment, although several areas were noted for improvement in the new country programme. The review process itself provided an opportunity for programme managers, from both UNICEF and the Government, to become more familiar with results-based programming. Wherever possible, the exercise also attempted at least a rough assessment of cost vs. measurable outcomes of the various interventions.

18. China's end-of-cycle review was organized as a series of separate reviews of major programme sectors: education; water and environmental sanitation; social development for poor areas; and selected health projects. Here, too, the review was designed to assess programme outcomes against stated objectives from the 1996-2000 programme as a major input into the design and strategy development for the new country programme. A more detailed presentation of the education component of the end-of-cycle review is included among the country evaluations presented below.

Major country programme evaluations

Evaluation of UXO (unexploded ordnance) awareness education (Lao People's Democratic Republic)

19. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the UXO project is a major component of the advocacy, protection and monitoring programme. The project is designed to raise public awareness of the dangers of UXO, and improve knowledge and skills, especially among children, for avoiding or minimizing these risks. Activities include the development and delivery of UXO messages through mass media and traditional media, the revision of school curricula to incorporate relevant information, village safety mapping, and the provision of "Sport in a Box" packages aimed at providing safe play alternatives for young children. The project is to be continued and expanded in the new programme cycle. The UXO project has been incorporated into the general communication strategy for **Facts for Life**, for which a special chapter on UXO has been developed.

20. An external evaluation was carried out to assess the appropriateness of the UNICEF strategy for promoting UXO awareness, and the effectiveness of project interventions in reaching audiences with essential messages and in promoting appropriate behavioural changes. In addition to UNICEF, agencies participating in the evaluation included the Lao Ministry of Information and Culture, National and Provincial Radio and Television, the Ministry of Education and UXO Lao, a consortium. Information was gathered at both national and community levels, focusing on in-school interventions such as curriculum revisions and "Sport in a Box", mass media public information programmes and village-based activities. The process by which target audiences and messages are identified, and the appropriateness of this process for UXO project-specific activities, was also reviewed. Finally, the evaluation attempted to identify specific obstacles to behavioural change in response to messages delivered through community awareness campaigns.

21. The key finding of the study was that the most successful areas of the UNICEF-assisted project are mass media and in-school curriculum. A set of indicators for measuring and monitoring project performance was developed as part

of the evaluation exercise. Specific recommendations included: advocacy for support and training of UXO Lao community awareness teams; improved data-gathering and analysis on UXO accidents; increased use of ethnic minority languages in the development and dissemination of messages (as many areas of UXO concentration are in the home territories of ethnic minorities); increased support to the Ministry of Education for the revision, production and training for a national UXO curriculum; improved message content and focus; and provision of assistance to child survivors of UXO accidents, and support for measures to de-stigmatize UXO survivors.

22. The study was timely in being carried out just prior to the formulation of the new country programme. Therefore, the recommendations have been taken into account in preparing a follow-up UXO awareness project.

End-of-cycle evaluation of the UNICEF/Government of China education programme, 1996-2000

23. This study was undertaken as part of the overall end-of-cycle evaluation of the China country programme for 1996-2000. Three projects, two in the formal sector and one in non-formal education, were selected for in-depth review. Specifically, the evaluation focused on the areas of design, implementation, outcomes and sustainability. The findings were expected to improve education interventions in the next programme cycle. A team of national and international consultants carried out the evaluation, with participation from local institutions and NGOs. A wide array of research tools and methodologies was used, including desk reviews, cross-sectional/transverse analyses, field observation, focus group discussions and interviews with key informants.

24. While the evaluation team found evidence of notable project achievements, such as teacher training and the provision of education materials at the provincial level and below that helped to further overall programme objectives, it also noted several areas requiring improvement in the new programme cycle:

(a) The programme was spread too thinly for effective management and adequate monitoring of inputs and results;

(b) The programme design was overly ambitious relative to available resources;

(c) Programme strategies, particularly in the formal education projects, did not adequately take into account broader, longer-term objectives of the education sector;

(d) The approach, particularly in the formal education projects, was basically top-down, with little involvement of local communities as channels for information-sharing and resource mobilization. There was limited strengthening of local capacity and a weak sense of community ownership;

(e) The lack of appropriate data and indicators hindered the ability of these projects to monitor change, measure outcomes and identify areas requiring increased attention.

25. Based on the recommendations of the evaluation, geographical coverage of the programme will be reduced in the new cycle. The new programme will be more focused, with monitoring mechanisms built into each project.

Assessment of the early childhood care project (Viet Nam)

26. This assessment was undertaken to establish the baseline situation in two diverse provinces of Viet Nam in preparation for expansion of the comprehensive early childhood care (ECC) project during 2001-2005. Phieng Luong Commune in Son La Province was selected as representative of a relatively well-developed category of communes, where indicators of access, communication facilities, economic potential, and health and education status are relatively positive. The second commune, Suoi Giang, is located in a remote and mountainous area of Yen Bai Province, inhabited largely by ethnic minority groups. This commune is much poorer than Phieng Luong, and generally scores much lower on social, welfare and economic indicators. Many local residents are not fluent in the national language, Vietnamese.

27. The Rural Development Services Centre, a local research institute, carried out the assessment in cooperation with UNICEF, the Early Childhood Development Department and the Viet Nam Women's Union. Participatory rural appraisal methods were employed, including workshops, focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, key informant interviews, mobility maps and site mapping. This information was supplemented by secondary data from local government agencies and institutions. In addition to community-level data, the study also collected information on social and cultural practices, time-use patterns, child-caring practices, gender-based economic roles and other data likely to affect receptivity to and sustainability of ECC project inputs.

28. Detailed community profiles for both Phieng Luong and Suoi Giang communes were developed from this information. From analysis and comparison of these profiles, an extensive list of recommendations was derived to assist in the planning and development of ECC activities in areas corresponding roughly to one or the other study sites. For the better-off, culturally mainstream areas, the recommendations focus largely on qualitative improvements or upgrading, such as better maintenance of existing infrastructure, facilities and equipment, and strengthening of knowledge and skills among teachers and officials for better communication of ECC-related messages. Many of the needed resources can be mobilized locally, with relatively limited supplementary support, coordination and technical assistance from outside. In remote areas, the problems are more basic, including illiteracy, a lack of accessible schools and health services and the use of minority languages. In these areas, the need for outside resources will necessarily be greater.

29. Previous experience with ECC pilot project implementation had shown that goals and objectives must be clearly stated, and appropriate and sensitive indicators are needed to measure outcomes. Sustainability requires that communities feel responsibility and ownership. Coordination among the implementing agencies — UNICEF, the Early Childhood Development Department and the Viet Nam Women's Union — is also essential.

30. Building on the ECC assessment and on the lessons learned through experience, implementation in the new programme cycle will include the development of commune plans of action, with broad participation by all major stakeholders from these local communities, including representatives from local government, mass organizations, local leaders and parents. The need to fine-tune overall ECC project objectives to take into account local needs, concerns and conditions has been recognized.

Conclusion

31. The MTR in Papua New Guinea outlined above rigorously examined the achievements and constraints at the mid-point of its country programme. Based on the review, changes in the programme and mid-course adjustments are being made. The need for a Pacific subregional perspective to more comprehensively manage UNICEF responsibilities in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific island countries has been identified by the Regional Office.

32. This report has also given attention to the end-decade assessment exercise undertaken by most countries in the region. In many countries, this may well have been the most significant evaluation activity undertaken during the year, or perhaps for several years. These reviews were especially important in that they provided an opportunity to consider, on a much longer time horizon than is usually the case, the progress countries in the region have been able to make on behalf of children and women.